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Spying: Political Fact Of Life

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BY COINCIDENCE, Great Britain announced the expulsion of 105 Soviet citizens accused of spying just as some radical scholars in Cambridge, Mass., were circulating a report that threw some light on American spy practices.

The fact is that all major countries maintain elaborate espionage networks.

Some well informed Western observers have been puzzled by the British vehemence in denouncing what is known to be standard practice and has been thought to be more or less condoned by mutual understanding.

One possible explanation that has been put forward has been that the recent defection by a high official of the KGB, the Soviet secret police, provided an unusual opportunity. He gave the British a list of Soviet espionage agents in Britain.

Some observers conjecture also that the governments of Britain and the United States had been waiting for an opportunity to undercut growing Western support for a European security conference which the Communist Bloc countries have been urging for several years.

IT WAS NOTED that the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, told Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko that Soviet espionage stood in the way of preparations for a conference on European security.

Secretary of State William P. Rogers, speaking with reporters at the United Nations Saturday, went a step further. He said that Soviet espionage activities in Britain must be halted before the preparation of a security conference on European security could begin.

Douglas-Home told Gromyko in two key letters about efforts by Soviet agents to pay bribes for commercial and military information, to obtain embargoed commodities and to conduct sabotage operations.

The document circulated in Washington a report of a panel discussion in London in 1968 led by Richard M. Bissell Jr., former

deputy director for plans in the Central Intelligence Agency, was an unusually frank account of U.S. covert intelligence operations in other countries.

THE PANEL discussion, one of a series conducted by the Council on Foreign Relations on intelligence and foreign policy, was attended by former officials including Secretary of the Treasury C. Douglas Dillon, former CIA Director Allen W. Dulles, and Robert Amory Jr., former CIA deputy director for intelligence.

Discussing the various means of covert intelligence collection, Bissell put reconnaissance in first importance. Next came communications and electronic intelligence, primarily undertaken by the national security agency. Finally, considerably below the other two methods in importance, he put "classical espionage by agents."

He described the Communist Bloc, "and more specifically USSR itself," as the "primary target for espionage activities" since the early 1950s.

"Circumstances have greatly limited the scale of operations that could be undertaken within the bloc, so much of the effort had been directed at bloc nations stationed in neutral or friendly areas, and at 'third country' operations that seek to use the nationals of other non-Communist countries as sources of information on the Soviet Bloc," the summary quoted him as saying.

More recently, he continued, priorities for classical espionage have shifted toward targets in the underdeveloped world, but "the USSR remains a prime target" and "Communist China would today be given the same priority."

The summary reported a general conclusion that espionage was not a primary source of intelligence against the Soviet Bloc or other sophisticated societies, "although it has had occasional brilliant successes (like the Berlin tunnel and several of the high-level defectors)."

"A basic reason is that espionage operates mainly through the recruitment of agents and the use of high-level agents," the summary went on. "A low-level

agent, even assuming that he remained loyal and that there is some means of communicating with him, simply cannot tell you much of what you want to know. The secrets we cannot find out by reconnaissance or from open sources are in the minds of scientists and senior policymakers and are not accessible to an ordinary citizen even of middle rank."

IN THE underdeveloped world, on the contrary, there are "greater opportunities for covert intelligence collection."

"Governments are much less highly organized; there is less security consciousness; and there is apt to be more actual or potential division of power among party localities, organizations and individuals outside of the central governments," the summary said.

"The primary purpose of espionage in these areas is to provide Washington with timely knowledge of the internal power balance, a form of intelligence that is primarily of tactical significance."

In order to predict a coup d'etat, the summary said, U.S. intelligence must penetrate the military and other agencies and organizations in the country in question, reaching junior officers, non-commissioned officers, labor leaders and others, it was said.

BISSELL WAS quoted as saying that many such penetrations would "horrify classicists of covert operations" by their disregard of the standards and rules for recruiting agents.

"Many of the 'penetrations' don't take the form of 'hiring' but of establishing a close or friendly relationship (which may or may not be furthered by the provision of money from time to time)," the summary said.

He noted that there was a stereotype that all covert operations are illegal and hostile, but he said this was not really the case. For example, the CIA once provided ostensibly private financing of a project also supported by a nearby the agency for international development. The CIA assistance came and "time for come hard

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